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ABSTRACT

An analysis of classroom discourse proposes four frames, modeled as concentric circles. The inner most circle is the lesson frame, removed or sheltered from outside influences and most likely, in a language class, to maintain second-language usage. The next frame from the center is the lesson-support frame, an intermediate layer of classroom discourse aimed at clarifying talk, repairing miscommunication, maintaining discipline, and supporting on-task behavior. The third, institutional-support frame is that in which communication relating to the wider school agenda outside a particular class takes place. The outermost circle is the commentary frame, a frame for speaking in one's authentic voice as an individual or community member. This is the most permeable to outside influences relating to popular culture and vernacular language. The model of classroom communication is illustrated using data from Hong Kong classroom interactions in a secondary school English class with a Cantonese-speaking teacher and students. The different frames of communication and use of different codes (English, mixed, Cantonese) are analyzed. Contains 16 references. (MSE)

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ED 420 200

Classroom Discourse Frames

Martha C. Pennington

March 17, 1998

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Institutional and Vernacular Framings

A classroom is a complex setting where teachers and students align themselves in different ways to the talk they produce and receive. In this way, the participants in classroom interaction apply different framings, in Goffman's (1974) sense, to classroom events.

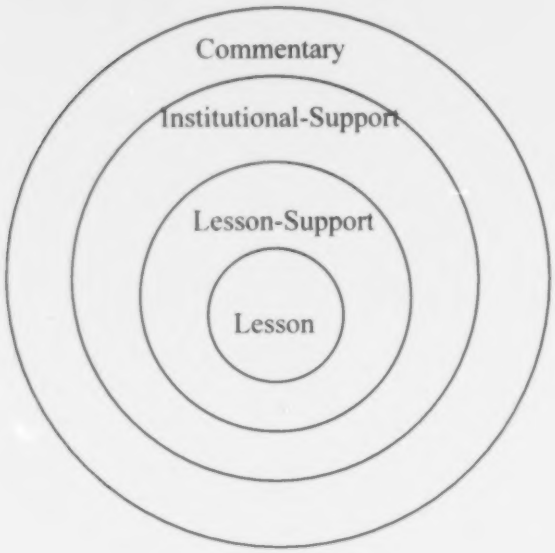
In looking at classroom discourse, a distinction can be drawn, first of all, between institutional and vernacular discourses or frames of talk. An institutional frame is associated with the premises of an educational institution and its participants. This means that certain specialized activities take place, together with a set of interlinked roles and discourse genres, within a school setting. According to Drew and Heritage (1992), institutional interaction "may be characterized by role-structured, institutionalized, and ominirelevant asymmetries between participants in terms of such matters as differential distribution of knowledge, rights to knowledge, access to conversational resources, and to participation in the interaction" (p. 49).

Since the educational setting, its functions, and its participants are linked to the wider community, talk within the school can be of both institutional and vernacular types, that is, can be constitutive of both institutional and vernacular acts. As Fraser (1978) was one of the first to articulate, institutional acts display knowledge in ritualized patterns or forms of exchange; vernacular acts are in comparison less prestructured and predictable, being "far more communicative of new information" (Fraser, 1978, p. 3). In being linked to the wider community outside the school and in being the likely arena of negotiation of meaning and of new ideas, vernacular acts and the discourse through which they are realized stand within the classroom in a creative tension with institutional acts and the discourse within which these are realized. Vernacular discourse has the potential to enrich institutional discourse in a productive 'feeding' relationship or to work against it in a counterproductive 'bleeding' relationship. In like manner, institutional discourse has the potential to 'feed' vernacular discourse or to 'bleed' it 'dry'. Where the goal is language learning, a productive linking of vernacular and institutional discourses increases authentic communication. In a second-language context, forming a productive linkage presents a challenge, since institutional acts are likely to be carried out in the second language while vernacular acts are carried out in the mother tongue.

A Four-Frame Analysis

I propose a classroom discourse frame-space that includes four frames which are based on my observation and study of data from secondary classes in Hong Kong and in Britain. These frames can be modeled as concentric circles (see Figure 1) such that a *lesson frame* is the innermost framing of talk, signifying that it is most removed or 'sheltered' from outside influences and so most likely in a language class to maintain second-language usage, and a *commentary frame* is the outermost frame, signifying that it is most permeable to outside influences relating to popular culture and vernacular language. Each frame is permeable to influence from the other frames. In proposing this particular frame-space, I am saying neither that these framings apply in all classroom discourse nor that the four frames I will discuss are the only possible framings of classroom events.

Figure 1. Classroom Discourse Frames



Lesson Frame

The innermost layer of classroom discourse, that within which the teacher organizes activities which display or develop syllabus content, can be termed a *lesson* frame. In some cases, the lesson frame is realized in a highly institutionalized way, as students and teacher give voice to the words and agendas of others, enacting a ritualized display of prestructured information, asymmetrical role relationships, and formal patterns of interaction, such as the IRF -- Initiate-Respond-Followup -- structure described by Sinclair and colleagues (e.g. Sinclair & Brazil, 1982; Coulthard & Brazil, 1992; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). See exs. 1-4.

Ex. 1- Teacher Whole-Class Explanation [The teacher is referring to some grammar notes he has given the students.]

The first one, direct speech: *Mary said, "I feel ill". "I feel ill"*, which is in present tense, so present tense should be changed to past tense. So *Mary said that she felt ill.* Here pronoun *I* is changed to *she*, and then the verb *feel* which is in present tense is changed to *felt*. OK. And then you have to change some adverbs of time, uh. *Tomorrow* will be changed to *the next day; yesterday* will be changed to *the day before*; *next week*, *the following week; last week*, *the week before*, and so on.

(Pennington, Lee, & Lau, 1996)

Ex. 2 - Teacher Whole-Class Definition and Examples [The teacher is clarifying the meaning of the word *diet*.]

Diet means the food, you eat normally, every day. For example, for our Chinese diet, we often have soup, rice, some meat, some vegetables, some uh - some fish uh, something like that, in our dinner - OK in our meal. OK, *diet*. The food you, you eat every day: soup, rice, some uh, meat, OK, vegetables. *Diet*.

(Pennington, Lee, & Lau, 1996)

Ex. 3 - IRF Sequence [The teacher calls on individual students to give answers to a grammar book exercise.]

T No. 1, Jose. Make a *wh*-question for the sentence, *Mr. Smith went to New York on Saturday morning.*
S-J *Who went to New York on Saturday morning?*
T Good. Now Mara, can you make another *wh*-question for that sentence?
S-M *Where did Mr. Smith go on Saturday morning?*
T Yes, and another, Paula?
S-P *When did Mr. Smith went to New York?*
T *When did Mr. Smith went to New York?*
S-P *Go* to New York.
T That's right: *When did Mr. Smith go to New York?* Any others? Itesh.
S-I *What time did Mr. Smith went to New York on Saturday?*
T *What time did Mr. Smith---*
S-I *What time did Mr. Smith go to New York on Saturday?*
T Yes, right. Good. OK. Now let's go on to the next one....

Ex. 4 - Explicating a Reading Passage [Students are going through a passage about travelling by overnight train.]

T (repeating the text on page 2 which a student has just read aloud)
The twins were travelling by train. They were going to visit their grandmother.
(to the whole class) Do you think that it was a long journey? Hm? Was it a very long journey?
(to an individual student) Carrie, what do you think? Was it a long journey or a short one?
S-C A long one.
T Right, so turn the page and Carrie, you read the next part.
S-C *It was a long journey....*

In some second-language contexts such as Hong Kong, a formal lesson structure is the only frame within which second-language discourse occurs (Pennington, 1995a). In other classroom situations (see, e.g., the case studies in Pennington, Lee, and Lau, 1996), the lesson frame combines institutional and vernacular features, as when real-life knowledge or experiences are used to illustrate or develop the content of instruction, as in Ex. 2. In such cases, students -- and sometimes teachers as well -- voice their true opinions and experiences as a way to make connections to institutional content, structure, and roles.

Lesson Support Frame

A second frame of classroom communication which can be identified is that of *lesson-support*. This frame can be characterized as an intermediate 'layer' of classroom discourse which helps to maintain the 'inner layer' -- to use the term of Sinclair and Coulthard (1982) and Willis (1992) -- of lesson-centered discourse. The lesson-support frame comprises moves aimed at clarifying talk, repairing

miscommunication, maintaining discipline and generally supporting on-task behavior in the lesson frame.

The lesson-support frame is closely tied to the lesson frame and its purposes of keeping the lesson on track and generating productive interaction. Within this frame, the teacher traditionally takes an institutional role of authority figure and instructional manager, and the students' talk is directed as a non-authority, novice, or initiate to the teacher as authority. See exs. 5-7.

Ex. 5 - Student Asks for Help [The teacher has just given an exercise for students to write at their desk and is helping a nearby student to carry it out when another student calls to him.]

S Teacher, I don't know how to do this one.
T All right. You wait quietly till I finish with Janis and then I will come to help you.

Ex. 6 - Physical Structuring for Task [The teacher is setting up the classroom arrangement for a task that requires all students to see the overhead projector.]

T I don't think all of you can see the overhead projector there in the back, so could all of you in the back row -- Tracy, Anita, Dino, Brian, Keith, Rosa -- please come up to the front with your chairs. You can sit here (gesturing to place at side of the room).

Ex. 7 - Disciplining [The teacher is trying to begin a lesson on health and safety by bringing up a recent incident.]

T You probably heard that the Queen Mother had a fall [when she
S [Miss, how did she fall?
T Well, if you would not interrupt me and would let me finish, I would tell you. You should not interrupt when a person is talking, should you?
S No, miss. Sorry, miss.

In a different kind of framing, a teacher may see some or all lesson-support as a vernacular act of aiding members of one's speech community to manage school activity. In this way of framing lesson-support, a bilingual teacher may communicate in the mother tongue as a way to reduce hierarchy and ensure students' full understanding. In communicative or process-oriented instruction, the students may take an active role in managing the lesson and sustaining productive interaction. In pair and group work, students take the main responsibility for maintaining on-task behavior. When students provide lesson support, they increase their participation in and ownership of education by taking on new institutional roles which at the same time represent a breakdown of traditional institutional hierarchy. As Hancock (1997) documents in a frame analysis of classroom discourse in a second-language situation, students carrying out communicative activities are likely to make use of a common first language in performing what I am here calling *lesson-support* moves, thereby limiting the amount of authentic communication in the second language.

Institutional-Support Frame

A third frame of classroom discourse is an *institutional-support* frame in which communication relating to the wider school agenda outside of a particular class takes place. Teachers' messages within this frame voice the words of others and may either be supportive of or in opposition to the other communicative framings for a given class, depending on whether the institution's goals are consistent with those of the teacher and students. In second-language contexts, teachers may articulate institutional-support messages such as announcements from the principal in the students' mother tongue (Pennington, 1995b), as a way (cooperatively) to ensure understanding for messages perceived as very important or as a way (less cooperatively) to save time for what are seen as more important activities.

Commentary Frame

Last but certainly not least, much classroom discourse takes place in what I will call a *commentary* frame. This is a frame for speaking in one's authentic voice as an individual or community member to express reactions to and opinions of people and events in the classroom and in the world at large. It is in the outermost frame of classroom communication, the one which is most related to the world outside. It is therefore an essentially vernacular frame, though it also can serve as a resource for adding authentic communication to lessons. See Exs. 8 and 9. The commentary frame is often interactive, or *dialogic*, in Bakhtin's (1935/1981) sense, with the lesson frame. In fact, all of the frames are mutually interactive or dialogic (Pennington, 1997c).

Ex. 8 - Pre-Lesson (Real Talk Unrelated to Lesson) [The teacher is talking to her students at the beginning of class, before the lesson begins.]

T	How are you today?
Ss	Fine.
T	Did you enjoy your weekend?
S	No.
T	Why? You have lots of homework to do?
S	Yes.
T	What did you do?
S	Chinese homework and also Eng. Comp.
T	Just give your draft to your classmates?

(Pennington, Lee, & Lau, 1996)

Ex. 9 - Disruptive Student Talk [As a pre-reading exercise about a character in a film, the teacher is trying to get students to discuss recent films they have seen.]

T	So have you seen any good films lately?
S1	"The Piano".
T	What kind of film was it?
S1	I guess a love story.
T	Maybe, a love story or romance. Any adventure films?
S2	"Hook", about Captain Hook and Peter Pan.
T	Was that an adventure film?

S2 [Yes, it -
S3 [How about "Debbie Does Dallas?" There's some real adventure in that one.
S4 Yes, real love-making, sex!
S5 You mean porno, man.
S3 Yea, porno.
S6 You guys, shut up!
T Boys, stop it! I don't want you talking about those things in here!

Communicative Framing

A teacher who attempts to shift from directive, transmissional lessons to facilitative, communicative lessons reframes instruction to a greater or lesser extent in terms of vernacular norms that reduce the hierarchy and set roles of teacher and students and allow for the development of discourse in a more natural and authentic way (Pennington, Lee, and Lau, 1996; Pennington and Richards, 1997). In a fully communicative framing of classroom discourse, all talk -- lesson, lesson-support, and commentary -- becomes part of the lesson, that is, becomes the input and the output of negotiated communication and thus of language learning. As illustrated in Ex. 10, in communicative language learning activities, students take roles as peer, authority, leader, follower, individual and group member.

Ex. 10 - Student Managed Talk [Students in groups of three are doing a task in which they must plan a six-month journey into outer space, deciding what provisions to take along.]
S1 We have to decide about the foods.
S2 Yes, what kind of food shall we have?
S1 I think we need to took with us-
S2 *Take*; you said *took*.
S1 Yea, right. I think we must take with us high caloric foods, I mean, like pasta, rice, something like that.
S3 I agree with you on that. I think we also need lot of protanic foods.
S2 I don't understand *protanic foods*. What is that?
S3 Like I mean some beef, eggs, milk, that kind of things.
S2 Oh, that is *protein*. Yes, we need to take with us protein. But there is a problem with that because those kind of food spoil easily.
S1 You are right. I think we need to freeze them.
S2 But there may be no way to keep them, I mean, frozen. How can we do that?
S3 You know it is possible to freeze something and you can take out all the water?
S2 I know about this. This is "freeze-dry". You can freeze-drying something, like coffee, some kind of soup, and vegetables, and meats, and other kind of things.
S1 So freeze-dry might be better than frozen food, so heavy and hard to stay frozen.
S3 Yes, that is a good idea. Why don't we add some freeze-drying things to our list. How to spell "freeze-dry"?

An Illustration of Bilingual Classroom Discourse Frames

The transcript of classroom discourse provided as an appendix, which is from a lower secondary English class with Cantonese-speaking teacher and students in Hong Kong, is structured in terms of lesson, lesson-support, and commentary frames. For the discourse segment presented here, in the lesson frame two students, S1 and S2, perform an interview roleplay, with S2 acting as a 'teacher' being asked questions by S1 as 'interviewer'. Their roleplay consists of what appears to be a fairly artificial question-and-answer sequence in English with increasing grammatical incoherence as turns become longer. The roleplay students appear to be talking about things related to school which both teachers and students have an interest in, including opinions about students, public examinations, happy times in school life, sports day, and opinions about teachers. All the while, these two students "are in fact cooperating to exploit the lesson frame to develop a 'layer of meaning' that comments on their own (real) school life in a sort of 'play within a play'" (Pennington, 1997c). Thus, within the roleplay, S2 seems to maintain the temporarily assigned 'teacher' role while at the same time giving some of his own (real) opinions as an individual, based on the questions he is asked by S1. Under the guise of the roleplay, S2 is therefore able to exploit what Bakhtin (1935/1981) termed 'double-voicing' to express different messages, including some of his own views that are critical of students and teachers and that represent his true opinions. In fact, the roleplay students are at least 'triple-voicing'. Not only are they acting in their institutionally ratified dual roles of students and the characters of the roleplays, they are also sending out messages as peers to the other students -- for example, in their choice of what questions to ask.

After the opening sequence of the roleplay, a commentary frame develops as a backgrounded channel of communication in which a number of students are talking at once (turn 3), triggering the teacher's move to quiet them down (turn 4). The teacher's 'shushing' of the students, which seems to have the desired effect, can be considered to be a lesson-support move. After S2's third turn, a student outside the roleplay appears to pick up on S2's prepositional error, "in sport day" (turn 8), taking a teacher-like role of authority and correcting the preposition error to *on* (turn 9). This correction is immediately echoed by another student (turn 10) with teacher confirmation (turn 11) and repeated by a student (turn 12) in code-mixed form as "*On* <a>." ('It's o*n*.'). The correction of *on* is then requestioned (turn 13) by a student as "*On* <dihng> *of* <a> Sir?" ('*On* or *of*, Ah-Sir?'). Unlike the previous turns by students labeled S3, S4, and S5, in the latter turn, S6 takes a normal student role in asking the teacher for clarification. This sequence of five moves which respond to the lesson-frame move of turn 8 and which aim to clarify a point of language can be considered lesson-support.

The fact that the teacher responds to S3 and S4's offer of *on* as the correction of S2's *in sport day* by confirming this answer in mixed code, "*On* <a>." suggests that he conceives the students' correction as occurring in a different frame from that of the lesson, one in which the teacher is not on center-stage and can take a "community-insider" role, giving confirmation by means of a repetition of *on* followed by a Cantonese interactive utterance particle <a>. Use of this form of utterance, which is considered to be an English lexical insertion within a Cantonese utterance frame, projects a more informal kind of discourse, one signifying solidarity, than that which is realized through use of English alone. Thus, K.K. can be seen as performing less in the role of teacher-authority and more in the role of a knowledgeable adult community insider who assists the students by confirming their proffered correction. In mimicking the teacher, S4 acts as a teacher-figure or adult superior, and thus as an authority setting himself above S2, who has been corrected. In his question to the teacher, S6, in contrast, functions in a role subordinate to K.K. but less that of an institutional subordinate -- i.e. in this case, a student -- than that of an initiate seeking confirmation and support from a knowledgeable compatriot.

After this sequence, S1 continues in his role as interviewer, asking a question (turn 14), "How do you think the other teachers?" (i.e. 'What do you think of the other teachers?') that makes other students

laugh (turn 15) and the teacher 'shush' those other students (turn 16). The students' laugh can be seen as occurring in the commentary frame, as the students outside the lesson frame react to those inside the lesson frame as peers, and K.K.'s "Sshh!" as being a move to support the lesson in the face of this laugh-commentary. The students' laugh suggests both the sensitivity of this question and their anticipation of what might follow, which is a negative statement about a teacher (turn 17), a point immediately taken up in the commentary frame (turn 18) by a student outside the roleplay, who says, "<Ngòh néih séi là> Mr. X [name of a teacher] yàn gàan...> ('Oh! You're dead. Later, Mr. X...'), with a possible reinforcement of the sense that S2's criticism of Mr. X will bring consequences (turn 19) stated as "<Góng yùhn.>" ('Finished talking.'). The point is also immediately taken up by K.K. (turn 20), who makes a supportive move[1] ("Any others?") that seems indirectly to ask for a positive comment about another teacher. S2 seems to recognize K.K.'s purpose, as he responds (turn 21) by making a positive comment about a teacher which is immediately confirmed (turn 22) by S1. In these latter two turns, S1 and S2 function in an institutionally sanctioned subordinate role of obedient students and followers of the teacher's will and implicit purpose in prompting 'Any others?'.

The positive comment made by S1 and S2 about a particular teacher elicits commentary from a student outside the roleplay (turn 23) who appears to be questioning the motives of S1 or S2 (the reference of <kéuih> 'he' is opaque) in asking, "<Keuíh mè yi sì a?>" ('What is he on about?'). A second student outside the roleplay answers this question (turn 24) by implying that one of the roleplay students is trying to gain the teacher's approval "<Keuíh jùng yi chaat hàaih.>" ('He likes to apple-polish'), presumably, by making positive remarks about their teachers. From the point of view of the peer group, 'apple-polishing', trying to win favor with the teacher or supporting the educational institution, is something to be remarked and criticized. The idea of apple-polishing is picked up and repeated (turn 26). In the meantime, a student (turns 25 and 27) opposes the opinion of Mr. Y followed by a critical comment in code-mixed form "Mr. Y <hóu> cheap. ('Mr. Y is so cheap = has no class at all.'), followed by echoes of "cheap" from other students (turn 28). In all this commentary, the students other than S1 and S2 are functioning not in ratified student roles but in the general role of peer as well as in the roles of leader and authority which are otherwise in an educational setting primarily those of the teacher, or the pseudo-institutional figures of the roleplay 'teacher' and 'interviewer'.

Neither the teacher nor either of the roleplay students respond in any way to this critical commentary. Rather, S1 and S2 simply complete the roleplay (turns 29 and 30), with a final remark by K.K. (turn 31) in the way of a formulaic closing and an evaluation which suggests that he was not wholly satisfied with what has occurred in the roleplay. Since it is closely related to the regulation of this roleplay, as well as those of other students to follow (see Pennington, 1997b, for more details), the teacher's turn is classified as lesson-support, with the teacher in the role of discourse-controller.

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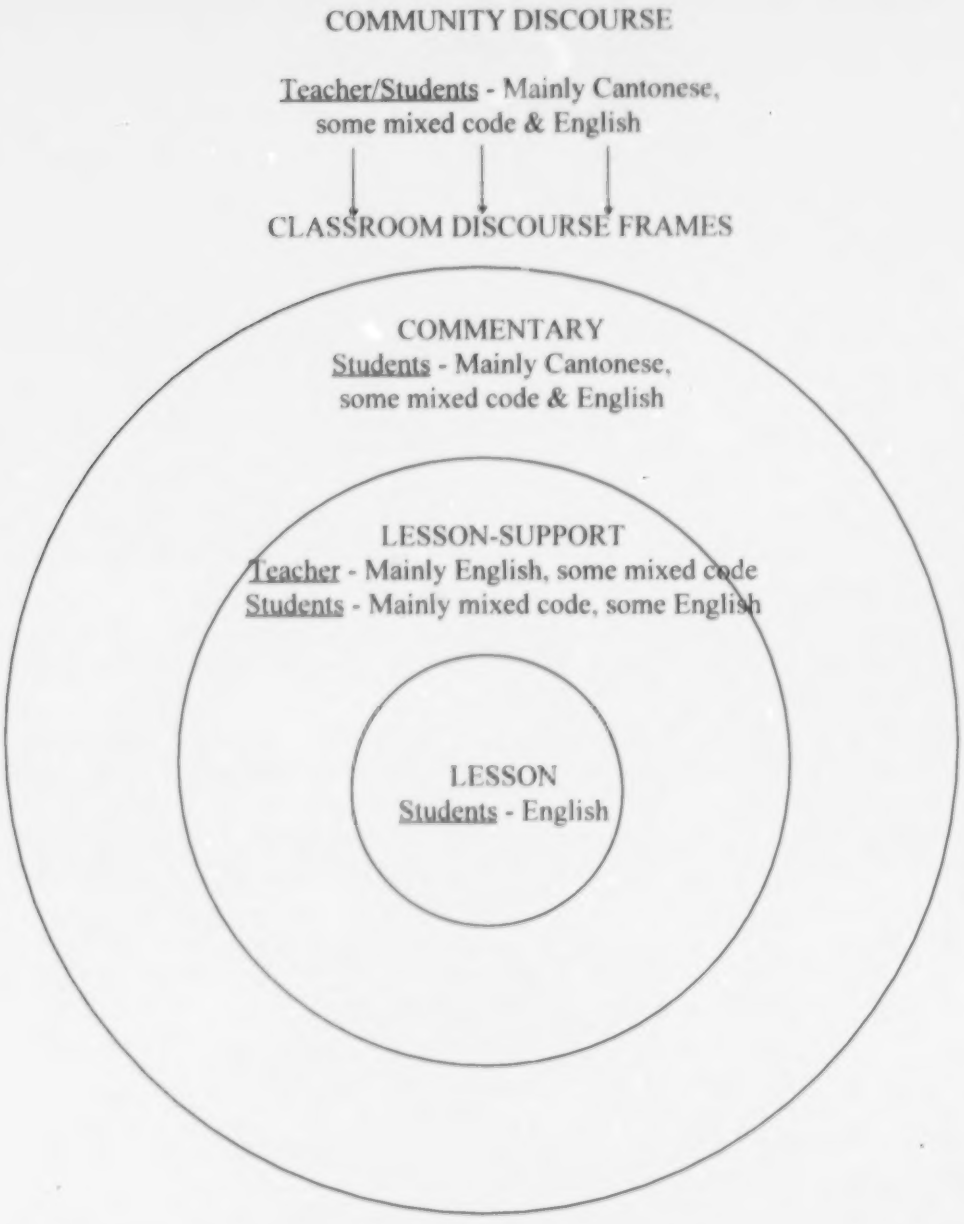
[1] This move functions to support the lesson frame but also supports the institution, in that it indirectly suggests that students must not criticize a teacher during class time or in front of another teacher. It could therefore be said to have a secondary function of institutional support. Other than this possibility, there are no instances of institutional support, such as announcements from the school office, included here.

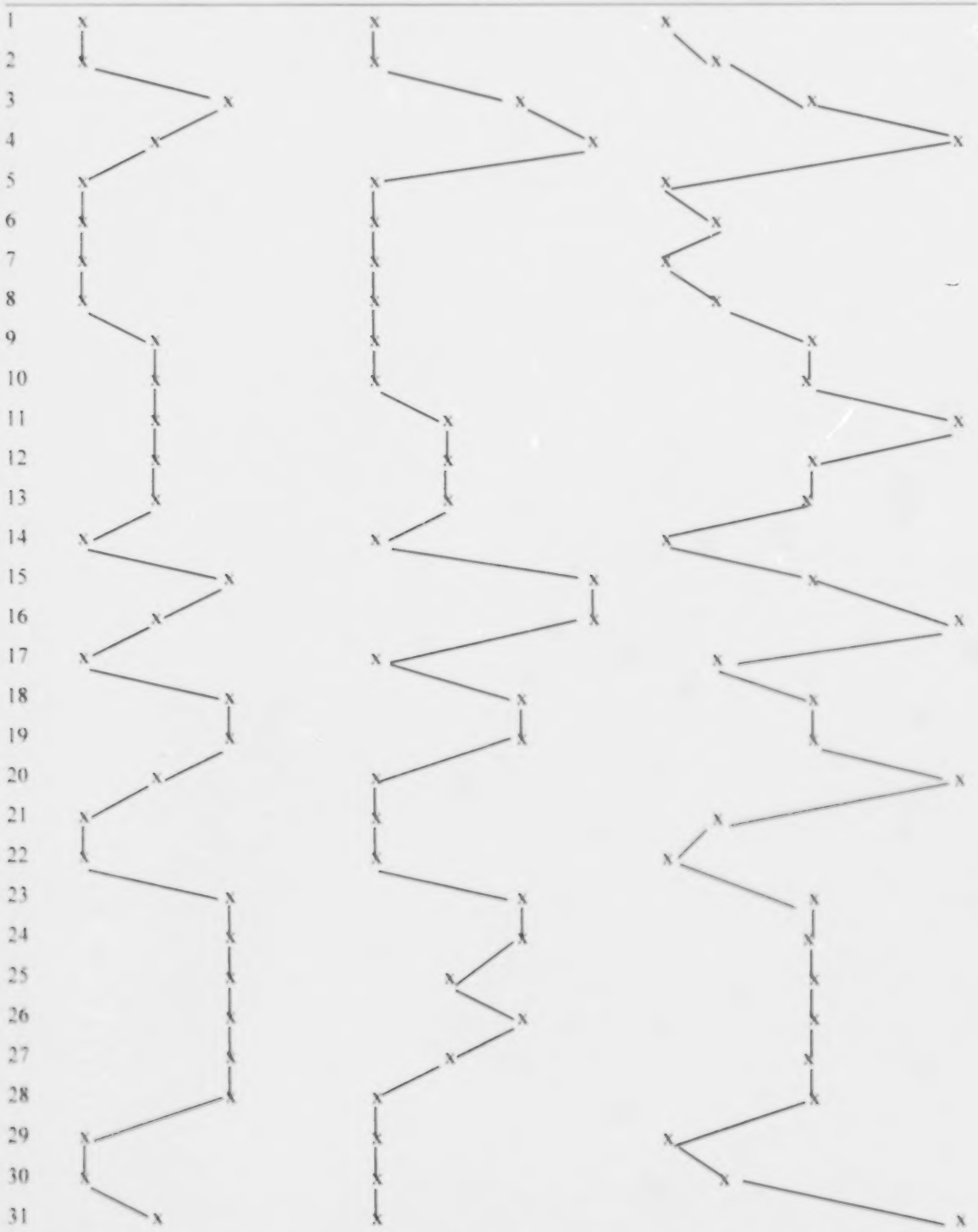
Figure 2. Frames and Context of Discourse, Language, and Participants (Pennington, 1997b)


COMMUNITY DISCOURSE
Teacher/Students - Mainly Cantonese, some mixed code & English
CLASSROOM DISCOURSE FRAMES
COMMENTARY
Students - Mainly Cantonese, some mixed code & English
LESSON-SUPPORT
Teacher - Mainly English, some mixed code
Students - Mainly mixed code, some English
LESSON
Students - English

The layered structure of the discourse in this transcript can be modeled as shown in Figure 2. The figure is an attempt to represent the context acting upon the discourse of this classroom, which, as an English class in an English-medium institution, is intended to be conducted in English but where Cantonese and mixed code occur as well. This outermost classroom frame is linked to an external community discourse frame within which both teacher and students mainly speak Cantonese. The figure thus provides a representation for the fact that in the commentary frame, mainly Cantonese is spoken, whereas in the lesson-support frame, which is more closely attached to the 'inner circle' of the lesson proper, a mixed form of language occurs along with English, under the influence of both the 'inner' and 'outer' frames. Only in the most 'enclosed' frame is English maintained exclusively.

The sequential structure of the discourse can be represented as the turn-graph of Figure 3 (next page), which shows a relatively constant exchange of turns in English within the lesson frame, with more Cantonese and an increasing invocation of the commentary frame from beginning to end of the stretch of discourse bounded by the start and finish of the roleplay performance. It further shows a recursive cycling of the discourse out of the lesson frame, under the influence of the students, and then back into this central frame from other discourse frames, under the influence of the teacher, in a 'zigzag' pattern which to a large extent parallels the movement of talk between the two language poles of English and Cantonese. This points up the dialogic – or "trialogic" – character of the frames.

Figure 3. Progression of Frames, Languages, and Participants (Pennington, 1997b)



The descriptive and interpretive value of positing these different discourse frames can be noted in the extent to which a different constellation of functions; content; language; participants; physical locations or spatial orientations; orientations of talk as vernacular or institutional; and role orientations of participants, including ratified as well as unratified roles are associated with each, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Frame-Space for Illustrated Segment of Classroom Discourse (Pennington, 1997c)

FRAME LABEL	ORIENTATIONS Spatial	Talk	Language	Role	PARTICIPANTS
Lesson	Center-Stage	"Institutional"	English	Primary-ratified *Student as "interviewer"* *Student as "teacher"*	roleplay Ss S1 S2
				Secondary-ratified *Student as individual* *Student as follower*	roleplay Ss
				Secondary-nonratified *Student as peer*	roleplay Ss
Lesson -support	Side-Stage	Mixed	English	Primary-ratified *Teacher as controller*	KK
			Mixed code	Secondary-nonratified *Teacher as helper*	KK
			Mixed code	Primary-ratified *Student as initiate*	S6
			Mixed code English	Secondary-nonratified *Student as authority*	S5 S3,S4
Commentary	Off-Stage	Vernacular	Cantonese Mixed code English	Primary-nonratified *Student as peer, leader, authority*	S3, S4, S6 S5 other Ss

A recognition of the three frames of communication within the particular institutional setting that is this Hong Kong bilingual classroom helps to elucidate the basis of the communicative dynamic that makes this discourse coherent. The division of participants into one dominant role, the teacher, and the subordinate role of students gives K.K. the right and the responsibility to speak the 'high' or institutional language, English; to direct the lesson; and to intervene in the interaction to ensure that the other participants in the classroom context speak an appropriate amount and type of English and otherwise behave appropriately, according to their subordinate institutional role as students. This role of teacher justifies K.K.'s being the main participant in the lesson-support frame, his functioning only in this frame, and his primary use of English in the illustrated segment of the lesson. In this segment, K.K. takes no role other than his institutionally sanctioned one, that of teacher.

The teacher-assigned roles of S1 and S2 give them the right to assume center stage and the responsibility to speak English and to keep the roleplay going. It also gives them a forum for expressing other things they want to get across to K.K. or the other students. If they are clever enough, they can perpetrate any message they want in the lesson frame, at least for a time, i.e., until the teacher intervenes to bring them back to *bona fide* lesson activity. The roleplay assignment clarifies the teacher's non-participation in the lesson frame and the roleplay students' selection of institutional topics. It also helps to explain the non-participation of other students in the lesson frame.

The lack of a role for students other than S1 and S2 in the lesson, or the lack of a sufficient role (i.e., beyond possible monitoring of the roleplay students' language), may be a reason that the other students carry out their communication almost entirely in a separate, non-ratified commentary frame. The possibility of exploiting the potential third-move response slot that exists in classroom exchanges (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) to involve these students has not been taken up here. Any potential to make communicative use of a 'third-move response function' is instead developed as a separate line of talk occurring in Cantonese. The general message to be gained from this analysis is that where students' real concerns are not attended to by the institution, they will express them somehow or other, perhaps in a different frame of communication and language as well. In this way, they create and exploit a different discourse system where their voices can be heard.

K.K. never makes a direct response (other than twice shushing the students) to any of the negative messages in the students' discourse. His attention seems to be focused only on the roleplay that is being performed at 'center-stage'. In this respect: "The teacher seems to be handling students' off-lesson remarks or behaviors by a sort of 'ignorance-is-bliss' strategy of not acknowledging their uncooperative or oppositional verbal or non-verbal behavior" (Pennington, 1997b). Such non-acknowledgment may represent a 'face-saving' pretense of normalcy or a 'survival strategy' in the face of students' uncooperative behavior.

In compensating for non-ideal classroom behavior by not acknowledging implicit messages in the 'official' classroom frames of the lesson and lesson-support nor the implicit or explicit messages in the 'outer' frame connecting classroom discourse to the wider concerns of the students and the other discourses in which they participate, the teacher ignores communicative possibilities other than those inherent in the lesson material and school agenda, including the agendas of the students in relation to school (which for them is as much an arena for peer socializing as an educational arena), and otherwise, including larger community, regional, and worldwide trends. When such non-acknowledgment becomes the teacher's customary practice, this leaves an opening for students to develop, within the range of discourse frames and communicative options available to a group of peers who are together for several hours a day, a verbal channel where they can evolve a new discourse which runs counter to that being

perpetrated in the official one controlled by the teacher and which may infiltrate the lesson frame as well in small or large measure. In ignoring an arena of talk that, as Rampton (1985) says, "[provides] the grounds for the growth of more rounded, three-dimensional relationships" (p. 80) between teacher and students, the teacher enhances the role-distance between self and students and perhaps encourages them to keep developing their discourse in a way which is counterproductive for classroom learning.

The Applicability of the Framework in Other Contexts

Other data collected from multi-ethnic classrooms in Britain (Pennington, 1997a) demonstrates the utility of this framework for a different type of context. In primary and secondary subject classes in Britain, I observed that some teachers devoted very little class time to lesson-support moves and tended to largely ignore the students' off-lesson talk, which was either irrelevant to the lesson (such as some girls talking about activities outside of school) or subversive of it (such as some boys making fun of other students or using profane language with reference to the teacher or the lesson). The longer the teacher did not attend to lesson support during a lesson, the more the commentary frame developed from a backgrounded to a foregrounded channel of communication.

In such cases, lesson-support was usually given by the teacher primarily in the way of on-the-spot reactions to major breaches of discipline. In this sense, most lesson support was 'compensatory' rather than 'strategic', as these terms are used in Pennington (1995, 1997d). In contrast, in those classes where teachers provided strong support for lesson content and activities from the beginning of the period and continued to monitor progress with repeated explicit lesson-support moves throughout the lesson period, students spent more time on task and there was less off-lesson talk.

Other than this type of tight control by the teacher, looser and more natural structurings of classrooms are also possible by making explicit reference to talk in the commentary frame. In both Hong Kong and Britain, teachers were seen to respond to students' commentary talk in a way that acknowledged their point of view and their right to speak while at the same time attempting to link their comments to the lesson frame. Some teachers responded to students' talk in the commentary frame by relating similar opinions or experiences, thereby expressing solidarity with their students and building up a shared background and common purpose. While such approaches to handling students' negative or off-lesson commentary were not as effective in maintaining on-task behavior as was the strategy of strong and constant lesson-support, they offer an important alternative route for keeping students from developing a counterdiscourse disruptive of the educational process while at the same time ensuring that they will participate fully and develop a real voice in the classroom. This natural give-and-take between instruction and reflection, between institutional and community purposes, thus helps to avoid the unrealistic isolation of lessons from real-world roles and discourses.

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Appendix

Segment of Hong Kong Secondary English Class (adapted from Pennington, Lee, & Lau, 1996; developed in Pennington, 1997b) Two students, S1 & S2, have been instructed by their teacher, KK, to roleplay an interview with a teacher about his 'lifestyle', while other students watch on.[2]

		Lesson Frame	Lesson-support Frame	Commentary Frame
1	S1	Excuse me Sir. We wants to make a interview for you. Do you mind to answer, some questions?		
2	S2	No, I don't mind. Please ask.		
3				Ss [indistinct student voices mainly speaking in Cantonese]
4			KK Sshh!	
5	S1	How do you think about, your students?		
6	S2	I think - I thought that in the, class, the public [examinations] or the result of them are always are very kind; but some can be always very unkind. And I think that it, in - in the word truth the public [examinations] had been very see the - not the many very important. I think this, thing must be stopped.		
7	S1	Did you have any, hap		

[2] Brief pauses, in the range of .4-.9 sec., are represented by comma; pauses in the range of 1-1.5 sec. are represented by hyphen. Semicolon represents a longer pause at clause boundary; period (full stop) represents a longer pause plus sentence intonation. A left bracket (with no right bracket) indicates overlapping portions of turns. Italic type indicates words in citation form. S1, S2, etc., indicate different individual student voices and Ss indicates that more than one student is speaking at once.

happy time or, things in your school life?

8 S2 In my school life in this year I think, my happy time is, in sport day. [Because I uh we have seen many - [laugh] many students bring in prize.

9 S3 [*On.*

10 S4 [*On.*

11 KK [*On* <a>. ('It's o*n.*')

12 S5 [*On* <a>. (It's *on.*')

13 S6 [*On* <dihng> *of* <a> Sir? ('*On* or *of*, Ah-Sir?'[3])

14 S1 How do you think the other teachers?

15 Ss [laugh]

16 KK Sshh!

17 S2 I think that's it they are quite good. But someone like Mr. X [name of a teacher] is very unkind.

18 S3[4] <Ngòh neíh séi là> Mr. X yàn gàan...> ('Oh! You're dead. Later, Mr. X...')

19 S4 <Góng yùhn.> ('Finished talking.')

20 KK Any others?

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[3] Cantonese <a> is often affixed to a name or title, including those in English, as a form of respect.

[4] 'S3'-'S6' are used to indicate different voices distinct from those of S1 and S2, though I am unable to reliably determine from the tape recording how many students other than S1 and S2 are actually involved in the discourse that goes on outside the lesson frame.

21 S2 And another teacher, quite good, like Mr. Y [name of a teacher].

22 S1 Mr. Y.

23 S3 <Keuíh mè yi sì a?> ('What is he on about?')

24 S4 <Keuíh jùng yi chaat hàaih.> ('He likes to apple-polish.')

25 S5 Mr. Y <hóu> cheap. ('Mr. Y is so cheap = has no class at all.')

26 S6 <Chaat hàaih. Keuíh chaat hàaih ga.> ('Apple -polishing. He's apple-polishing.')

27 S5 Mr. Y <hóu> cheap. ('Mr. Y is so cheap = has no class at all.')

28 Ss Cheap.

29 S1 Thank-you.

30 S2 Not at all.

31 KK OK, thanks very much. OK for this group. At least you did a very good performance.